

# Volunteer Firefighter Physical Reimbursements

*The following article, submitted by Brigitte Smith, Executive Secretary of the Board for Volunteer Firefighters, appeared on the WFCFA website from September 26, 2007 – March 20, 2008.*

Olympia, WA - Not only was the passage of SHB 2147 a great piece of news, but so was the news that the Board increased the volunteer physical reimbursement rate from \$50 per person to \$100.

The Board asked staff to track the amounts that departments were paying for new volunteer physicals over the course of two months. In that time, the staff was able to document that the physicals ranged in price from \$25 to \$500. Board members agreed that it is imperative that departments carefully screen their new volunteers to ensure that volunteers being hired into departments are physically fit and capable of the demands placed on their bodies.

To better enable departments to do so, the Board looked at the average cost of physicals and found that it was around \$100. While they understand that the increased amount won't fully cover the cost of some departments' physicals, it is their hope that the additional amount will help to offset some costs and encourage other departments to either begin requiring physicals, or to begin requiring more stringent physicals.

If you are unfamiliar with this service, the Board will pay up to \$100 to ensure that each new firefighter, EMT, or reserve officer has a physical exam to determine if they are fit for duty. If your volunteers have never had a physical, they can begin now. As long as we haven't paid for a physical since they've been with your department, we will still pay up to \$100.

If your volunteer is new to you, but came from a different department where they had a physical, we will still pay for a new one with your department. We know that you often don't have access to those prior records and, even so, many things may have changed since their last physical.

On a final note, we will even pay for a new volunteer physical if your volunteer was granted a leave of greater than six months! Again, we understand that a lot can happen in that time, and members that used to be fit for duty before they leave may no longer be fit once they return.

For more information on how the volunteer physical reimbursement program works, please contact us and we'll help you through the process:

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